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Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 DHA-02 SCA-01 VO-03 INSE-00
PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
H-01 DODE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13
/064 W
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O 220852Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2708

C O N F I F D E N T I A L MANILA 11327

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, RP
SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE BOAT CASE REFUGEES

SUBIC 290143Z JUNE 77

1. AT PARTY NIGHT OF JULY 21 COMMISSIONER OF IMMIGRATION EDMUNDO REYES CONFIDENTIALLY INFORMED CONSULAR OFFICER THAT A VIETNAMESE NAVY GUN BOAT HAD BEEN "HIJACKED" BY SIX CREW MEMBERS WHO HAD KILLED THE VESSEL'S ENGINEER, HELD THE CAPTAIN AT GUN-POINT, PICKED UP TWENTY-THREE OTHER VIETNAMESE FRIENDS AND RELATIVES, AND HAD SAILED TO SUBIC BAY. HE IMPLIED THAT THE VESSEL HAD ARRIVED VERY RECENTLY. HE SAID THAT THE SIX HIJACKERS HAD EXPRESSED DESIRE TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES. HE SAID HE WOULD CONTACT CONSULAR OFFICER FOLLOWING MORNING AND PROVIDE FULL DETAILS.

2. REYES DID NOT MAKE CONTACT, BUT ACCORDING TO U.S. NAVY INTELLIGENCE REPORT OF WHICH EMBASSY OBTAINED COPY JULY 22, VESSEL WAS NOT VIETNAMESE NAVY GUN BOAT BUT RATHER COASTAL CEMENT CARRIER MS VAN CO (NO. 16) ENROUTE SAIGON TO DANANG, THAT FOUR STOWAYS LED BY WOMAN AND ARMED WITH AK-47 AND AT LEAST TWO PISTOLS TOOK OVER VESSEL EARLY MORNING JUNE RPT JUNE 25 WITH HELP OF ONE CREW MEMBER.
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HIJACKERS KILLED ONE MAN, APPARENTLY A POLICEMAN ON BOARD, AND SAILED INTO SUBIC BAY JUNE 28. THE FIVE HIJACKERS HAVE EXPRESSED DESIRE TO GO TO U.S. AND THREE OTHERS NOT TO RETURN TO VIETNAM. NAVY INTELLIGENCE REPORT INDICATES HIJACKERS ARE: TRAN NGOC HUNG, BUI VAN HAI, PHAM VAN SON AND DANG VAN SON, A CREW MEMBER TURNED HIJACKER, AND THE LEADER OF THE GROUP, LE THI HUE AKK (FMRS. PHAM VAN SON).

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3. ON JULY 21 UNHCR REP INFORMED BY DFA THAT GOP FAVORABLY DISPOSED PERMIT FIVE HIJACKERS AND THREE OTHERS TO REMAIN IN PHILIPPINES PENDING ONWARD MOVEMENT TO OTHER COUNTRIES BUT THAT FINAL DECISION UNCERTAIN AS MATTER BEING HANDLED BY THE MILITARY. UNHCR REP HAS NOT BEEN PERMITTED TO INTERVIEW HIJACKERS OR CREW MEMBERS BUT SAID THAT REP OF VIETNAMESE EMBASSY HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO TALK WITH VESSEL'S CAPTAIN AND THAT GOP WILL PROBABLY PERMIT CAPTAIN AND OTHERS WISHING TO RETURN TO VIETNAM TO SAIL IN VERY NEAR FUTURE.

4. EMBASSY HAS BEEN AWARE SINCE RECEIPT OF REFTEL JUNE 29 OF A SHIP WITH 29 PERSONS ABROAD UNDER FILIPINO CONTROL IN SUBIC BAY BUT HAD BEEN INFORMED BY DFA THAT PERMISSION FOR PERSONS TO LAND AS REFUGEES WAS CLUDED BY UNSPECIFIED SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS AND BY GOP DOUBTS THAT SUCH A LARGE VESSEL (IT IS 100 FEE LONG) PERMITTED THEM TO CONSIDER PERSONS ABROAD AS "BOAT CASE" PEOPLE. THIS VESSEL AND THAT MENTIONED BY REYES WERE NOT IMMEDIALY ASSOCIATED BUT STORIES OBVIOUSLY RELATE TO SAME VESSEL.

5. WHY REYES DISTORTED STORY IS UNKNOWN. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IN VIEW OF SECRECY SURROUNDING HANDLING OF MATTER REYES WAS REPEATING AN EXAGGERATED RUMOR. SINCE HIS VERSION OF INCIDENT MAY HAVE BEEN TOLD TO OTHERS, IT IS CONFIDENTIAL

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POSSIBLE DEPARTMENT MAY
RECEIVE PRESS OR OTHER INQUIRIES ABOUT VIETNAMESE NAVY MUTINY OR SOME SUCH. FROM AVAILABLE INFORMATION THE SITUATION APPEARS TO BE ESSENTIALLY AN ARMED TAKE-OVER OF A CIVILIAN VESSEL BY CIVILIANS FOR ESCAPE PURPOSES.

6. EMBASSY HAS JUST BEEN INFORMED BY UNHCR REP THAT DFA CLAIMS ALL RPT ALL PERSONS ABOARD VESSEL WANTED TO LEAVE VIETNAM AND THAT THE MILITARY HAVE REFERRED ENTIRE CASE TO THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT FOR A DECISION AS TO WHETHER ANY OF PERSONS WILL BE PERMITTED TO REMAIN IN PHILIPPINES TEMPORARILY. UNHCR REP STILL HAS NOT BEEN PERMITTED TO TALK WITH ANY OF THE VIETNAMESE IN QUESTION. WE HAVE A REPORT FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT DFA HAS RECOMMENDED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT THE BOAT AND KIDNAPPED CREW MEMBERS BE RETURNED TO THE SRV AND THAT THE GROUP WHICH SEIZED THE BOAT BE RETAINED AND TRIED UNDER PHILIPPINE LAW FOR ILLEGAL ENTRY.

7. WE WILL SEEK TO CLARIFY CONTRADICTORY ASPECTS OF FOREGOING AS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.
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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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